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SUMMARY

On the assumption that a woman's physical and mental condition at childbirth is a product of her life-long daily habits and ideas as well as any particular injunctions set up to insure well-being in pregnancy and parturition, the cultural scene was searched to ascertain all possible relevancies.

The farmers of Bang Chan lived in a tropical, rice-growing terrain, annually flooded by the monsoon run-off. Food was plentiful even if cash was not. Except for better housing and equipment, and a greater enjoyment of market novelties, the rich lived much like the poor. The work in the fields by women paralleled that by men. Sharp physical demands, especially at planting and harvest, made them muscular.

At marriage the partners were fully mature and no woman was married against her wishes. The birth of a child was welcomed as leading to higher personal, social, and economic status.

The underlying concepts which explain why the food and other injunctions, both pre-natal and post-partum, and the ritual behavior took their particular forms, are explained.

The human body, harboring multiple immaterial souls, was seen as composed of earth, fire, water, and wind. Illness was caused by intrusive disruption of these four elements, or by soul loss. Food and medicines had properties which could be used to restore balance in the elements. The traditional curers or exorcisers had magical and herbal remedies obtained ritually from a teacher. Since Buddhist phrasings, often read from old texts in weekly sermons, molded Bang Chan's conception of life, the ultimate cause of health or illness was the presence or absence of merit. This determined one's kam (karma), the balance sheet of virtuous actions which one added to, or reduced by sinning throughout successive existances over eons of time.

The Buddhist cosmic view of individuals as separate autonomous beings brought it about that help was the only dynamic relationship possible between people. The bonds established by helping people, on this earth, especially in the tasks of feeding priests, lasted on into successive incarnations. Thus, meritorious people met again and might marry again. Families had continuity over time, and babies were born into the "right"

Chapter II

MAN AND WORLD

771 Bang Chan had for years heard preaching from Buddhist scriptures. Co-existing with these teachings were Hindu elements referring to Brahma, Shiva, and others. People also believed in an animistic lore concerning frightening ghosts and spirits (phī), protecting deities (thewadā), maternal goddesses, princely spirit-lords, and other supernatural guardians of a more or less benevolent nature. To these beliefs were added special bodies of knowledge, such as sacred literature from India and traditions of astrology from both China[8] and India. Other elements might be traced to Muslim influence, just as Muslims shared some of the foregoing references with their Buddhist neighbors. Bang Chan shaped its views of nature and man from all these sources. However, we shall not try in what follows to specify the sources of its beliefs.

The Human Body

826 774 184 192 The body of flesh, blood, bones, and other materials, harbored the noncorporeal aspects, in particular a person's merit story (kam; Skr: karma) and his several souls, viz., the khwan, the winyan, and the four chetthaphūt (cf.J.R. Hanks, 1959). Views of the human body formed no unitary system, but were as varied as their origins. Thus, sometimes villagers distinguished the material from the non-material: "a human being is composed of two aspects: rūp (body) and arūp (non-body)." Sometimes learned persons referred to the Hindu-Buddhist concept of 32 parts of the body, one of which, the winyān-soul, was the "organizer" of the others.

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8. No trace was discovered of the Chinese concept of Yin as female, dark, cold, and evil, etc., and Yang as its opposite.

[115] 9. Ming (Mc.F. 880) was once given as a term for "soul" by a Muslim informant, but without further information.

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As to the gross structure of the body, some persons learned about the skeleton when, in preparing corpses for cremation, the undertaker stripped the decaying flesh from the bones, usually in the presence of relatives and spectators of all ages. Occasional autopsies because of suspected sorcery, and surgical removal of a fetus from a deceased mother by caesarian section led to some knowledge of organs and blood vessels. Male and female masseurs of considerable competence were trained in the Chinese neuro-muscular system. A system of "origins," e.g. that the elbow-origin was in the arm pit, and the chest originated at the spine, might relate to the Chinese concept of linkage points on the body, in particular, acupuncture. In Bang Chan's popular conceptualization, the protecting skin which enclosed the body was thin at the top of the head and especially so at the stomach area. An old image also persisted that the body cavity itself was a relatively undivided space extending from neck to pelvis. Inside the cavity, food dropped from the top, faeces packed down at the bottom. Through the body curculated slowly the blood; several kinds of water (nâm) (McF. 453) e.g., the nâm khraam (refuse-water) (ibid. 453) in the abdomen; and several winds (lom) (ibid. 728) e.g., the pushing lom hêng (ibid. 487), and the pulling lom chawat (ibid. 287). The small hair-whorls noted on the head, hip, or shoulder were construed as minor vortices of these currents, or as souls (khwan).

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Foremost in people's minds were the elemental constituents of the body. The human body, along with every animal, plant, or mineral in the world, was made up of 4 elements (thâat): earth, fire, water, and wind (air).[10] This ancient four-fold view, also familiar to the Greeks, had mixed in Bang Chan with the traditional five-element Chinese system (metal, earth, fire, water, wood) because gold, iron, and wood were also spoken of as constitutional elements, and there may have been others. Some persons said that the proportions of the 4 major elements were the same for everyone, others, that they varied for different temperaments, which were also affected by the presence or absence of elements other than the basic 4.

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10. "The body, comprising about a bushel of powdery earth-element, is held together by half a bushel of juicy water-element, and propped up by the windy-element. The fiery element digests what is eaten or drunk and preserves the body". (Visuddhi-Magga. [Warren:157-158]).

All food was also made up of the 4 elements. Here rice was of particular importance. The body was seen as built and maintained by rice. Flesh in fact was rice, an image probably derived from Buddhist scriptures. 11

Each element carried with it its substantive aspect of heat, flowing, etc., and its astrological nature and relations. Elements could be compatible or incompatible with each other. Earth, water, wind, iron, and wood for instance were compatible. Gold "got along" with all elements. Fire, though, was incompatible with wind, water, and wood for it could destroy their proper proportion.

The effect of astral and planetary relationships at the moment of birth on one's constituent elements induced qualities of character.12 Mind and body were a continuum. Because family members were born at different moments of time, intrafamilial temperamental differences were expected.13 Persons made up of incompatible elements quarreled. Thus, friction might occur between parents and children. For a husband and wife, who lived in especially close proximity, the constitutional elements were of special importance. Through marital relationships their elements were in physical contact. Consequently, in the old days, a couple contemplating marriage ascertained through their horoscopes the compatibility of their natal elements to determine whether they could live together without destroying each other. For instance, a girl with much fire in her make-up was easily angered and prone to fevers. She could not make a successful marriage with a boy with much wood.

Physiology

A single physiological process controlled the functioning of the body and the mind; i.e., the equilibrium of its elements. If the elements were in proper balance, proportion or harmony, a person was healthy; if an element were excessive or deficient,

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11. "This, my formed body, is composed of the 4 Elements, generated by Father and Mother, built up from rice, porridge and sour gruel," says the Buddha (Suriyabongse 1951:11).

12. Merit, the other determinant of character, is discussed in "Influences on Health" below.

13. Cf. the proverb "The joints (knots) on the same stem are nevertheless unequally spaced, so even brothers are of different minds," (Cerini 1904:14).

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a condition which also affected the functioning of the others, he was ill or emotionally disturbed.[14] For example, dropsy, swelling, and yellow eyes came from excess water; cholera and constipation from earth mists. Wind and fire were the great trouble-makers.

Wind "was stronger than the other three elements." Either blowing wind or still air easily penetrated the skin and caused difficulties all the way from flatulence, stomach-ache and diarrhea to a minor head-ache and dizziness ("if wind whirls inside the body, the house swims around"); from incessant crying to serious interference with breathing, hence fainting and death. An accident, such as a cut or broken bone, disturbed, and might "let out," the air. Acute pain ensued if "rigidity" of earth, fire, or water interfered with the proper movements of the internal winds.

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Anger and fever were both in the category of excess fire. Since fire was particularly implicated in disturbed social relations, coolness was emphasized as the desirable state of body and mind. The blessings for both sexes at birth and at the marriage ceremonies enjoined the individual to be "cool and happy." There was some evidence that cool natures were tender (on) natures. Since women by nature were assumed to be "tender," and men not, a difference in element constitution may have been sex-linked. However, everyone knew of women who were not tender. For persons abundantly endowed with fire, temper control through temperature control was a constant preoccupation, for the allowable margin of fluctuation was especially narrow.

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Food occupied an especially important place in a person's welfare because food controlled the fire element.[15] The following material on diet is the background for some of the dietary injunctions during pregnancy and lactation.

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14. In view of Thailand's ancient Indian contacts, the parallels (and differences) between Bang Chan, and Hindu Ayurvada as described by Opler (1963:32-35), are noteworthy.

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15. "What was drunk or eaten by its decaying created the fire element in the body" (Suriyabongse 1964:12).

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An ill individual made a preliminary self-diagnosis to ascertain which was the pertinent specialist to consult. A quick cure occurred if the diagnosis were correct, because the specialist then had the exact curing agent and magic for that disorder. If the first mɔ̌ were unsuccessful, the patient moved on without embarrassment to another. In fact, a person might be a-curing with 2 or 3 mɔ̌ at once, and a modern doctor besides (cf. Hauck, 1956:37):

> "She goes to Mɔ̌ Suk who is good for spirits, and to Mɔ̌ Plung at Lan Pakachet who is good for headaches and vomiting. Two years ago her child was sick with ŋan chak and was cured by Mɔ̌ Suk. First she took the child to Suk but a few days later went to Sawad at Lolae because she was afraid the child would die. Sawad gave tablets. She did not revisit either mɔ̌ because the child recovered. Mɔ̌ Suk helped most because he had experience in magic" (55.).

[571] For reasons of convenience, however, people also developed lasting relationships with particular mɔ̌, usually the nearest, or a kinsman, to whom they turned first for medical help.

75. 826 Medicines cured either by direct rectification of deficiencies or excesses or on a principle of counter balance. Their effectiveness was increased by incantations. A rhinoceros in massive presence caused earth excess in the form of cholera (Bangkok Calendar, 1869:73), but a bit of its bone restored earth deficiency. Cobra was a direct ingredient for heat, but only sour tastes gave water element. A mɔ̌ described the medical theory behind curing techniques for the heat-rash, boils, and fever sometimes suffered after childbirth:

> "If the body is hot, fire is in excess, by which the other elements are heated. Thus the blood cannot move freely, and cells are deprived of their normal blood supply. The cells die, thus creating a boil or abcess. If the fire element is higher, the water of the body is lowered to a deficiency. Drinking water alone will not restore the water level. Sour tastes must be given. If the patient is thirsty, the lung is hot."

Influences on Health

In Bang Chan, a discussion of sickness and health merely in terms of element balance would be true but insufficient, or even superficial. After all, whether manipulated by oneself or by a professional curer, elements could only be controlled within certain limits. Far deeper questions were posed, probing the ultimate nature of health, life, and death. What determined the particular proportions of a person's 4 elements with which he had been born, and whether he had, say, a preponderance of wood from Jupiter or gold from Venus? The immediate answer of astrological confluences on the date of birth would be true, for each day had its own qualities and aspects, but it was not enough. Why had he been born on that date to that set of governing factors? In life, why did one person meet the circumstances that created illness, while another lived in glorious health? The answers to these questions must be sought in the Buddhist moral and cosmic beliefs.

The Buddhist universe operated on a principle of immutable law. Each person received his just due, suffering for his own sins, enjoying reward for his virtue. There was no personified deity to help, forgive, or blame. Moreover, attachments were the cause of sorrow. Because existence was fraught with desires, all life was basically painful. Even flashes of happiness by their cessation caused sorrow.

In this universe and on this earth, individuals, each a unique and independent entity, were born to live and die, over and over again, throughout eons of time. They bore no relation to each other. Separate and autonomous, each was in charge of his own destiny. All beings formed a single grand scale of existence from demons in hell, through such lowly creatures as worms and insects, upward through dogs, cats, buffaloes, and elephants to mankind, then on up to angels and gods in the last paradises before the peace of Nipphān (Nirvana).

The insight of the Buddha showed the way to break the sorrowful eternal cycle of rebirth and reach Nipphān. The Buddha perceived that meritorious behavior caused one to progress up this ladder of existence toward freedom from incarnation. In each life merit (bun) could be accumulated by compassionate behavior: caring for priests, and being kind and generous to persons less able to care for themselves. With merit one's next life was happier and freer of restrictions. A dog had more merit than a worm, a buffalo than a dog.

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The Pre-natal Baby

The baby's body "started as a hair." After conception it was necessary that the father, with his semen during intercourse "strengthen" the baby. There was less, if any, intercourse in the last weeks of pregnancy, though no prohibition against it. Food eaten by the mother, "transformed into blood," built the baby's body. For the first 3 months the child was a "clump of blood." By the third month the mother felt a shaking (san) at the clump. This was the "khwan soul flitting in and out of the baby's heart." The picture of pre-natal growth was expressed by the chant at the tonsuring ceremony:

> "The body of a child inside its mother's womb grows gradually like droplets of oil coagulating at the end of the yak's hair. The 5 apertures appear, the nose, 2 ears, and 2 eyes; and then the hair, hands, and feet. The infant's hands embrace its placenta from which it sucks water day and night. There it sits on its mother's faeces while her newly eaten foods pack closely on its head. Its chin rests upon its knees, its face is turned toward the mother's back as it leans back against her belly. It looks like a monkey in the rain, sitting, waiting, trying to warm itself in a hole at the foot of a tree" (S.S.).

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Before birth (and after), the baby was weak and tender (ɔ̃n), with especially soft, thin skin.

The Pregnant Woman

In pregnancy, a woman saw herself as moving toward the fulfillment of her long adumbrated female office[23] of nurturer. The essence of her femaleness, to be "soft and yielding, to lengthen life by nourishing others" was heightened.

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23. To paraphrase Fortes: "office," subsuming both status and role, means "calling, occupation, or life-task." It serves "instrumental or utilitarian ends," yet also has the "other dimension of duty and responsibility enjoined, sanctioned and above all symbolized in ceremonial or ritual forms placing it in the moral order" (Fortes:62).

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sin for the sake of nourishing the child. Some Thai village women followed a local Chinese belief that eating a female chicken gave strength during pregnancy. Eating a rooster, though, caused miscarriage through "ectopic gestation." Thai Muslims recommended chicken whole-heartedly.

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Medicines

Beginning early in pregnancy, one or more kinds of medicine (yā) were taken. These hot-tasting medicines of ginger, galanga, pepper, and such in 28 per cent alcohol were either bought from the big selection at a Chinese drugstore, or were made up at home from alcohol or water and an envelope of ingredients. A woman made the choice herself with the advice of experienced persons. Even the Muslims who ordinarily frowned on alcohol permitted their women to take it at this time. A few women, though, said they "did not like to get drunk," so took their medicines in hot water. The quantity varied from two to six spoonfuls per day, with big increases as delivery approached, e.g. "two big cups a day of it during the ninth month."

The primary purpose of medicine was to increase the appetite, but there were other reasons. Fragrant Medicine (yā hawm) cured wind. One Muslim midwife's mixture "stimulated the amniotic fluid." Other preparations had more general objectives. One label advertised "strength and good blood to men and beauty to women;" another promised to "maintain the mother's body and make the inner organs do their work properly" (M.M.M.).

In the last months, the reason for the medicines was to build up the body's heat. This purpose was not affected by hot tastes, which burned but did not necessarily raise the heat, but rather by alcohol, cobra, and specific decoctions. A label cautioned, though, "Not to be used by pregnant women with fever," lest the increment of heat be excessive. Snake Brand medicine, an exceedingly hot concoction used primarily post-partum, was occasionally taken in mild dosage during pregnancy. (Used full strength it caused miscarriage, so was rumored to induce abortion). The heat raised the body's temperature far above the ordinarily desired coolness so as to implement birth.

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The Physiology of Birth

At parturition the body's usual needs were reversed. The child could not be ejected under the normal, cool condition of the body. The pushing and pulling winds inside the body that ordinarily circulated slowly had to be

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speeded up with heat to the point of blasts. The strength of the contractions of labor was in direct proportion to the speed of the winds' circulation. The great pushes of the expulsive lon beng "broke down" the sac with the amniotic fluid (nam thun hua: water-that-supports-the-head-of-the-child), and forced out the child, water, and the placenta.

After the child was out, the mother was cold, weak, and exhausted. Her uterus was full of harmful fluids. Heat was needed more than ever not only to warm her but to give the winds "the power and push" to drive out three undesirable birth-waters: "The blood that looks like ordinary blood but is bad,"; the amniotic and abdominal body water (nam khreu: refuse water); and the pale, viscous, repugnant "fish-water" (nam khao pla). Therefore, a hot fire was built, close to which the mother lay (yu fai), turning all sides of her body towards the flame. She bathed in or drank hot or warm boiled water (nam suk: cooked, or ripe, water). She ate safe foods like rice and dried fish,[11] and kluai nam bananas, continued to take alcoholic medicines of the hottest sort, such as Snake Brand, and occasionally might be given cobra or other hot curries to eat. For a first-born, a woman stayed eleven or nine days by the fire (always an odd number), with stays shorter for each successive child, but never less than five days.

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Complications sometimes developed because of inadequate control of the heat. A "headache and a hot body" indicating "stagnation of the blood and the fishy-smelling-water," was cured by a heat-producing decoction. Rashes often occurred, causing small boils that might develop into sores. To soothe these, turmeric was painted on. In the most dangerous cases the heat "drove the bad blood to the heart, to the face or belly" where it was recognised by serious swelling, with resulting madness or death. In fact, one MD felt that the

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11. The reasons for rejecting fresh fish during pregnancy ("lest a creature of hell be born") would not hold after parturition. Yet fresh fish was rejected then too "as bad for the womb." One suspects that the less odorous dried fish was substituted so that the odor of fresh fish, like air-borne, incompatible food, would not affect adversely the "fish-smelling" post-partum discharge (nam khao pla). In Hauck's list of foods "bad for mother during the post-partum rest," the reasons are apparent: Sour tastes did not dry out the body, but built up water; egg was too cooling; jackfruit brought in wind; glutinous rice and the sugar of sweets "wet the uterus;" fruits did not give strength and were excessively cooling (cf. Hauck,1959:16).

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heat could be better controlled by medicine alone, saying "I do not prohibit a fire, but if called because of difficulties such as a temporary paralysis, I always take the patient off the fire and prescribe a decoction, or recommend more pickled medicine (*yā dong*)." "Damage to the thigh ligaments," treated by a masseur, was said to result from insufficient rest by the fire. If the baby died, the mother did not curtail her fire-rest but finished it out as planned. As will be seen later, the fire-rest had far deeper meaning than just physiological restoration.

date of all, Sao Hā Day, one Saturday in April, which was the fifth day of the waxing moon of the fifth month, in the year of the Big Snake. That boy is truly blessed. He will be the best and most respected doctor or teacher. He is in school now and people are always telling him he is bright. Chāi came on a Monday, so he'll be charming, but, alas, always roaming away from home! This new little son has his mother's features, which is as desirable as a daughter's having her father's features. Still, no one knows what characteristics come from a parent. One more thing, Dūan. Now you may take medicine as you please." Shortly after, Sāi took leave until the next day.

The new mother turned her face toward the fire and tried to sleep. It was night. Lek was close by, and Song slept in his mosquito net near Chāi's cradle. The fire was so hot it kept waking Dūan. Though the smoke made her eyes smart it kept the mosquitoes away. In spite of the discomfort, Dūan was eager to have the fire as hot as she could stand it, for this heat and that of the medicine would dry her uterus, rid her of the bad blood and waters of childbirth, restore her strength and stimulate her milk. She forced herself to drink as much hot boiled water as possible to keep out the dreaded wind element that might get into her body and cool her. When, however, the fire was overpowering, she dripped water from a handy jar with a cloth.

The next day, Sāi returned. With warm, boiled water she bathed Dūan--this time the upper part of her body also--and the baby. The boiled water was much more important for the mother, but being available, was used for the baby, too. Sāi washed the soiled clothing and the baby's little cloths. Turmeric was again painted on both Dūan's and the baby's abdomen, head, and neck to protect from wind. Sāi questioned and examined Dūan. Measuring a handspan down from Duan's groin, she pressed outward gently. "I want to see if these particular ligaments on the thigh are joined. They are often damaged and do not heal if the time by the fire is too short. Some mothers cannot walk at all. They have to call a masseur for regular treatment." To "make the ligaments well," she tapped Duan's body all over with the second of the tapping-fruit balls and had her sit on one while bathing. She massaged the muscles, stiff from lying quietly near the fire, by pressing in the ball with her hands and even feet. Medicinal herbs were warmed and laid on Dūan's breasts so that the "useless early milk [colostrum] which would give diarrhea" could be worked out and thrown away. "The real milk is not ready for the baby until the third day," Sāi said, "but if the baby is crying much, and if there is milk some mothers start nursing on the second day."

Almost from the moment of his birth, whenever the baby

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The genetic connections of those who did not help in cash, or labor at, say, cremations or cooperative work-parties were forgotten. Degree of help was a measure of kinship solidarity, and even marked the outer boundaries of kinship.

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The word "help" turned up over and over again in the context of childbirth. Birth came about because a married couple, already steeped in the knowledge that they had been so helped by their parents, "helped another individual to new life" through the mingling of semen and blood. The midwife's role was merely to "help." When a woman engaged a midwife, her words were, "Will you come to help me?" A baby having trouble breathing right after delivery "had to be helped for half an hour." Most important, only through the reciprocal help of mother and child was rebirth to earthly life implemented at all. Parturition was an active, cooperative venture between 2 autonomous beings. The child set the time for labor to start by "deciding to be born" when his 32 parts were "complete,"[38] and he had worked off sufficient sin in purgatory to permit rebirth. The mother by her labor "helped the child to be born," but she could not succeed unless he actively "helped," too. Though other assistance to her was desirable, such as persons to support her back and press out the infant, only his help was essential. Without it she had a hard or unsuccessful labor. A woman who gave birth successfully without outside help created no stir because it was evident that the baby had been helpful.

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38. Informants were not uniform in opinion here. Some said the khwan (or winyan) was the first "part" to establish itself--arriving at the moment of conception--others that it was the last (Textor:262). In either case it was highly volatile during pregnancy, and the trapping by winnowing at birth was the major means of rooting it in the person. During pregnancy, medicine for wind in the fetus was given "which was not effective if there were no khwan," but whether the khwan was the mother's or the child's was not certain.

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Chapter VIII

CHANGES

In studying change in the customs surrounding childbirth in Bang Chan, we have D.B. Bradley's description of birth in Bankok in 1865 as a base-line on which to project our findings. Since most of the population of Bang Chan (Thai, with a few Laotians, Mon, Muslims, and Chinese) stems from Bangkok, we may reasonably assume that the parallels derive from a true historical connection. Bradley's description fitted Bang Chan as if written today:

> "Siamese theory in regard to the part which external and internal fire plays in the functions of life and health is made to work powerfully...There is, at such times, a diminution of heat in the body, and consequent liability to stagnation of the blood, which, if not guarded against by fire, will leave the uterus flabby and enlarged, bad humors in circulation, a consequent weak state of the stomach, resulting in the secretion of too little milk, and that of a bad quality for the child, all of which will be likely to be followed by a host of other fearful maladies to both mother and child...[Thus a woman lies by the fire]... exposing all parts of her body, and more particularly her abdomen, to that drying process, so that the uterus shall be forced to shrink up quickly to its normal dimensions, and the sanguineous streams which had been diverted to support the child before birth, shall, by fire, be driven backward to their more usual limitations, all which is...a sine qua non to a sound constitution and good health in the future..." (Bangkok Calendar, 1865:78-84).

Bradley showed that some behavior one might call "change" today was a recognized alternative in 1865. For instance, in Bang Chan a few women "are made too unhappy (klum) by the fire so cannot use it. They should take extra amounts of pickled medicine" (yā dɔɔng). Bradley wrote, "a few delicate females...who cannot endure [this] usual treatment, are compelled, against all their ...fears of the consequences, and all the importunities of their

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan
Thailand AO1

4. The good person is one who tries to behave in an honest way.
5. Do not shove anything at anybody or throw anything at anybody.
6. Do not make loud noises when people are working.
7. Do not spit or clear your phlegm or yawn in public.
8. Do not gobble your food or scatter things on your plate or chew loudly.
9. Do not sit or walk carelessly or abruptly against other people.
10. Do not touch or horse-play with people who are your close friends.
11. If you are a superior, wherever you go, you should look after the comfort of your inferior.

Again, although the list is almost self-explanatory, note should be taken of some cultural emphases that run through several of the items: the stress on behaving properly toward superordinates and subordinates; the emphasis upon motoric and emotional self-discipline, and conversely, the implicit fear of losing control over one's impulses (as indicated in the dictum against horseplay, even with one's friends); the general stress of respecting the inviolability of every person; and finally, the great emphasis on the importance of the body in human behavior and social relationships. Although this last point may not seem unusual, in that the dicta are addressed to children—with whom one would expect much concern over the body—it in fact represents an area about which all Thai regardless of age are sensitive. In general Siamese, considerably more than Occidentals, tend to be aware of physical bearing, beauty, and ugliness, as well as the use of the body as a communicative device. A person's physical appearance is an indication of his character, particularly his moral nature, and kinesthetic modes are explicitly used for conveying love, regard, and as suggested above, disrespect.[2]

It is worth reëmphasizing that the above items are standards for, not descriptions of, behavior. The attention given to controlling body movements is simply to emphasize for the child that people will decide whether he is good or bad on the basis of the way he handles his body, and he must therefore exercise extreme care in its use. Items one, nine, and ten are not meant to imply anything fundamentally wrong with touching another. Most Thai, particularly members of the same sex, thoroughly enjoy expressing their mutual affection through bodily contact: by holding hands, grasping the leg or arm of the other, and in Bang Chan, sometimes by sleeping with one another. In the last instance, there is absolutely no sexual contact; often during the cold season the practice serves not only friendship ——— but the additional purpose of keeping the participants warm.

[2] Although it belongs to a different area of behavior, it is not insignificant that in classical Thai dance every body movement—the configuration of the hands, the position of the legs, eye movements—has a specific, conventionalized meaning. In the oldest, or *Kon*, version of the dance, the only means of communication other than that provided by masks are body movements.